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A

LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

R. H. BISHOP, D. D.,

PRESIDENT OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY,

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS

“PLEA FOR UNITED CHRISTIAN ACTION;”

ADDRESSED PARTICULARLY TO

PRESBYTERIANS;

BY J. L. WILSON.

CINCINNATI:

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CINCINNATI, FEBRUARY 5, 1835.

THE REV. ROBERT H. BISHOP, D. D.,

President of Miami University.

DEAR SIR,

To me it is a subject of no small regret, that any thing has taken place, in the Presbyterian church, to interrupt the harmony of those, who ought "to speak and mind the same things." It is both mortifying and alarming to know, that among those, who profess an adherence to the same system of faith, and order of worship, differences of opinion and practice prevail to such an extent as to agitate the Church and cause the world to stumble. You cannot be insensible that the contradictory opinions preached and published, among *us*, for several years, and the diversity of practice, which prevails, have brought the Presbyterian Church to a *solemn crisis!*

At such a time, as this, when a change must soon take place for the better or worse, all distinguished men, in our denomination, who, like yourself, are elevated to the highest stations of influence, seem bound to state, in unequivocal terms, the ground on which they stand, and the course they intend to pursue. Other classes of society look up to them for opinions, and are led, *right or wrong*, according as the guides they follow are correct or erroneous.

My venerable friend, Dr. Bishop, has not been backward in shewing the foundation which he occupies; and I hope to give no offence while I examine whether it be rock or sand.

Men in deliberative bodies, greatly excited by agitating questions, may say and do things which ought not to be considered *tests* of their abiding principles. But when a man of mature age, under the responsibilities of ministerial office, and clothed with all the influence of presidential eminence, preaches a sermon, "by special appointment," and gives it to the public, through the press, in more than one edition, we must suppose that he intends it as a test of his orthodoxy, and that he desires the church to be formed upon this model as far as the subject of the discourse extends. Such, sir, is your Sermon entitled "A Plea for United Christian Action."

To examine this sermon as a reviewer, is not my object. But as I consider the principles advanced, and plans recommended, hostile to the interests of the Church of God, and particularly to that branch of his church, to which we both profess to belong, I shall frankly call your attention to some things which you may possibly review with profit to yourself and future generations. The title of your sermon, in my opinion, ought to be changed. Is it not *a plea for united action with New England Divines*? If this be not the plea, I am utterly at a loss to understand it. For New England divines, who act consistently with their avowed principles, and meddle not with the affairs of others, I cherish a high respect. If a man should profess to be a Presbyterian, and then should speak and act agreeably to that profession, I care not whether he is from New England or Old England. There are men from New England, who uniformly act correctly in the Presbyterian Church, and, I am sorry to say, there are men from Scotland, who as uniformly act the other way. In proposing then to change the title of your sermon, *no disrespect* is intended to New England Divines. If a man be a sound Presbyterian, he will be sure to enjoy *united christian action* with men of the same stamp, whether they be educated at New Haven or Princeton. And yet I am not so indifferent with regard to the place or school, from which a man comes, as you represent our fathers to have been. You say, in your sermon, page 10, "The inquiry from what country, or from what school, or from what particular church a man came, was with them an inferior question." Now, sir, the records of the first Presbyteries, and the first Synod organized in America; and the standing rules of our church, in regard to foreign ministers, prove directly the reverse. The history of William Tennent, the venerable founder of "the Log College" at Neshamony, contradicts your statement. He was admitted into the Presbyterian Church as early as 1713, and his admission was attended with all the caution and solemnity of synodical action. The reasons are recorded in the Synodical Book, as the fathers said—*ad futuram rei memoriam*—for the benefit of posterity. But it appears that some men have profited nothing by their *memento*!

The Tennents, whom you mention in your sermon, were the sons of this venerable William Tennent, and of course could not be among the fathers of the Presbyterian Church, in North America, as you have stated or represented them. But you have said correctly, p. 9: "It was the peculiar happiness of the Tennents, and the Blairs, and of Davies, and Witherspoon—that they understood well—the essential features of genuine Presbyterianism"—and permit me to finish your sentence by adding—it was their "peculiar happiness" *to act accordingly*. If they found a man who was trust-worthy, they enjoyed with him "united christian action," and if they found a man unsound and unfaithful, they dismissed him, without respect to school or country.

They endeavored to *keep out* heresy, and to *put out* those who *crept it in*; but they were total strangers to the modern policy of *inviting it in*, and *fencing it in*, and denouncing those who endeavor to *keep it out*; and then preaching and publishing "A plea for united christian action."

You say, p. 9, "The leading features of American Presbyterianism are few and simple;" and on p. 10, you state that one of "the great questions" asked by the fathers, in relation to any applicant for admission to be—"does he agree with us *substantially* in our view of divine truth?" If so, you add, "We leave him to apply and act out these few general rules in his own way."

Who can help being "startled" at the word "substantially," in connection with the phrase, "we leave him to apply and act out these *few* general principles in his own way"—when we remember the plea of the New Haven professors—"for substance of doctrine"—and their rejection, of what they call *secondary principles or explanations*? You tell us, p. 9, "Dr. Rogers, of New York, found it extremely difficult to make a Scotchman understand what American Presbyterianism was." If that venerable man was now living, he would find the same difficulty still.

But to return to your "plea for New England preachers." You say, p. 11—"The preachers from New England formed a large portion of the first Presbyteries and the first Synod which were formed in the English colonies."

Was it so? Dr. Miller has told us, that, "The Presbytery of Philadelphia was constituted in 1704, and very soon after, some who had been bred Congregationalists, in *South Britain*, or in New England, acceded to the new body, and consented to bear the name and act under the order of Presbyterians. In 1716, the number of ministers had increased so far, CHIEFLY BY EMIGRANTS FROM EUROPE, that they distributed themselves into four Presbyteries—and erected a Synod."

The records of the Philadelphia Presbytery, shew that in 1707, three years after their organization, they had *one man and one only*, from New England, the other members were Scotch and Irish Presbyterians. What becomes, then, of your "large proportion"? But did this *one man*, in the Presbytery of Philadelphia act consistently with his pledge and give the Presbytery no trouble? Let the brief history of Jedediah Andrews answer the question.

Did those Congregationalists, who, according to Dr. Miller, "Consented to bear the name and act under the order and discipline of Presbyterians" redeem their pledge? Did preachers from New England promote or disturb the peace of the Presbyterian Church, when admitted into her judicatories? Let the history of Wade and Pemberton, and the records of the first Synod answer. And why, sir, did they disturb the peace of the Church? Simply because the Presbyterians of that day would not "leave them to *apply and act out* their *few* general rules in their own way."

Permit me here to ask, was it to promote truth or for popular effect that you made the following statement, p. 11, 12: "If we could this day, tear from our bosom, all who are of New England birth, or of New England descent, we would exhibit a map of the Presbyterian Church in North America, on a very small scale."

Who, sir, ever thought of such an indiscriminate *tearing out*? I apprehend when the Presbyterian Church is purged from her present corruptions, so as "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace," *many* "of New England birth and New England descent will remain, in her purified bosom, and *not a few*, from other quarters, will be cast out. And whether the map then, shall be small or great, will be a matter of no consequence compared with her purity, peace, and ultimate prosperity.

Hence, all that you have said, p. 12, 13, about those excellent men, Mills, Schermerhorn and Smith, can be looked upon in no other light than an *ad captandum vulgus*—a rhetorical fraud on the popular ear. If only the ear of the multitude was cheated it would be of little consequence, but such an appeal in such a sermon commits a fraud upon the hearts of thousands.

How impressive are the Apostle's words, and what a warning ought they to be to you and me, "By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple." Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

You say, p. 6, "As a church, we have been threatened, during the last two years, with a division or separation;" and you go on to inquire whether there are to be *two* or *twenty* divisions—whether they are to be east or west, north or south—and you give up, in despair, the idea of "a separation upon any national plan;" and then you ask, p. 7, "When these divisions shall be made, what will be the advantages secured?" Ought you not rather to have said to your audience, "We, as a church, are divided. The line is drawn to every point of the compass. Not the compass of the surveyor nor the compass of the mariner, but the *elective affinity compass*, which marks the lines of our ecclesiastical earth. By this *new invention* our churches are cut up into a thousand sections—some of our Presbyteries, and one Synod are untrammelled by geographical lines—they are left to *act out* their *few substantial* principles in their *own way*. Diversity of opinions and diversity of plans, are inseparable from the nature of man. Every man, who thinks for himself, must have some plans peculiarly his own. In New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Hamilton, Zanesville, Indianapolis, and a thousand other places, these "elective affinity" divisions exist. They are sanctioned by the highest judicatories of our church, and surely when we are so *divided* there is nothing to hinder us from "united christian action." It appears to me, that, in some such strain as this you ought to have addressed the people, instead of saying, "We have been threatened with a division." You have not told

us from what quarter the threat came; but you make it plain enough, that you are opposed to a "separation," and you think "the God of our fathers is hedging up our way with thorns, that we cannot pass," p. 7. It may be right, like Job, to ascribe the evils with which we are afflicted to the Lord, though the devil may bring them. And now in the day of our perplexity, your thorns reminds me of the men who have corrupted our Church—"the best of them is a brier, the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge."

Page 7, you ask "In what page of the history of the Church have we any proof that separation or division has been among the means which God has blessed for the building up of the kingdom of his Son."

I answer, we have the *proof* in almost every "page of the history of the Church." The merest tyro in ecclesiastical history, can point for *proof* to the question of Moses, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Exo. 32—to the history of Korah, Num. 16—to the reduction of the army of Gideon from thirty-two thousand to three hundred men, Judg. vii—to the command of Christ, "*Come out of her my people*"—in short, to the whole history of the Reformation. As long as there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the serpent can *creep* into the church, so long God will bless "division and separation among the means for the building up of the kingdom of his Son."

You seem to take the broad ground that "all the professed people of God" must be united—that according to "the spirit of freedom and inquiry and independence," every man must have his own way of expressing his views, and his own plan of operation. This coincides precisely with a plan disclosed to me by another Dr. of the West, in 1832—that no Confession of Faith should contain more than three articles, and all pulpits must be common!

To sustain yourself on this broad ground, you endeavor to make us believe, p. 19, "That Paul neither recommended a *separation* nor enjoined *discipline* in the Corinthian church, because "the whole church was too much infected with the evil"—of divisions and schisms, and abuse of the Lord's supper, to be capable of exercising discipline. If Paul neither recommended a "separation" nor "enjoined discipline" in the church at Corinth, what is the meaning of such passages as these—"Do not ye judge them that are within?—To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh—Put away from among yourselves that wicked person—With such an one not to keep company—no, not to eat—Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump." Will you tell me this "separation"—this "discipline" related to immorality in *practice*? I grant it. But was there no *discipline* in relation to immorality in *principle*? What then is meant by these passages?—"For there must be also *here-*

sies among you, that they which are *approved* may be *made manifest* among you"—“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established—I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all others, that, if I come again, I will not spare—for we can do nothing against the *truth* but for the *truth*.—I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use *sharpness*.” Use *sharpness*! On whom? Certainly on the rulers! They had excommunicated the fornicator. For this they were commended. But they had not expelled those who caused “debates, swellings and tumults”—and for this delinquency the Apostle threatens them. “There must be *heresies* that they which are *approved* may be *made manifest*.” But how can the *approved* be *made manifest* without the condemnation and excision of heretics? And yet you have made thousands believe, if they can believe you, that there was no *discipline* enjoined, no *separation* recommended. Nay, more, that the Corinthian church was so corrupted that she was incapable of exercising discipline! And you have applied this to the present state of the Presbyterian church, and put in your “Plea for united christian action,” when our church, according to your own shewing, is so afflicted with “divisions and schisms,” that discipline is at an end! This solves an ecclesiastical phenomenon, which no ingenuity has before been able to explain—namely, that you, and many others, have for several years, set your faces against all discipline for heresy! You can pronounce, as you did, in the Synod of Cincinnati, that a *trial sermon* is NOT THE GOSPEL, and then *vote* to sustain the ordination of the man who preached and published it, and held on tenaciously to all the errors it contained!

I am constrained to judge of men not from what they profess, but from the scale into which they cast their influence. And if your influence has not been in the scale of error and misrule, in the Presbyterian church for the last three years, then I confess that my senses have deceived me.

You say, p. 18, “We are not more divided in any of the leading doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith, than the fathers of that age themselves were. Nor have we any reason to believe that the Divines of the Assembly themselves, in their final vote upon the most of the articles in the confession, were agreed, upon any other principle, than the principle of *compromise*.” Agreeably to this, you represent “Presbyterianism like all other *isms*—when used in controversy—very vague and equivocal and ambiguous,” p. 8, 9.

I have been so *foolish* as to believe that Presbyterianism, as set forth in our standards was not like other *isms*, “*vague*, equivocal, and *ambiguous*,” but that it contained “a well defined system of truth and order;” even “the system taught in the Holy Scriptures.” Nor have your statements about Rogers, and Owen, and Baxter, led me out of this *foolish belief*!

Has Dr. Bishop yet to learn that the Assembly of Divines did not meet of their own accord—that they were permitted to discuss no subject but what was proposed to them by Parliament—that they were carefully watched by Lords and Commons, to see that they did not transcend their commission—that they sat long and carefully investigated every subject committed to their consideration—that when they gave “their final vote” upon each article—they gave *that vote* upon *principle*, and not upon *compromise*—that they were all at liberty when their labors were ended, and the Assembly was dissolved, to adopt the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Government, or not, as they pleased—and that Owen, and Baxter, and Usher, and many others never adopted the standards of the Presbyterian church? Why, sir, do you amuse yourself and deceive your hearers, by illustrations drawn from the theological differences of such men?

To shew that there was no *compromise* in the votes of the Assembly of Divines, I need only cite one or two cases. The Assembly were unanimously of opinion that “Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.” But some members thought that dipping or immersion ought to be allowed as “*a mode of Baptism.*” On this subject the Assembly were divided, and the moderator gave the casting vote against immersion. They all agreed that “pouring or sprinkling” was right. But 24 out of 49 thought immersion might be allowed as “*a mode of baptism.*” When they were so equally divided upon “*a mode*” of an external ordinance, and no *compromise* could be had—and when the majority inserted in the book that “dipping the person in water is not necessary,” but that “baptism as ordained by Christ is the *washing with water* by sprinkling or pouring water upon the person, in the name of the Father, &c.”—can any sober minded man believe they would *compromise* the essential truths of salvation?

Take another case. The Assembly of Divines, of Westminster, was, at first, composed of Episcopalians, Erastians, Independents and Presbyterians. I know not that any of the Anabaptists, Neonomians, or Antinomians were members. The Parliament sent an order “that the Assembly of Divines and others, should forthwith confer, and treat among themselves, of such a discipline and government as may be most agreeable to God’s Holy Word—and to deliver their advice touching the same, to both Houses of Parliament, with all convenient speed.” A plan was proposed, in order to unite all parties, namely—that every bishop should be independent, and that synods and councils should be for concord and not for government. Abp. Usher was agreed to this plan. But no *compromise* could be obtained. The Presbyterian form of church government was adopted. I find no case of *compromise*, but in regard to the Solemn League and Covenant. The Scots’ commissioners were instructed “to promote the extirpation of popery, prelacy, heresy, schisms, seep-

ticism and idolatry, and to endeavor an union between the two kingdoms, in one Confession of Faith, one form of Church Government, and one Directory of worship."

The Solemn League and Covenant was to pave the way for all this, and was to be considered the safeguard of religion and liberty. This league was adopted in Scotland, none opposing it but the king's commissioners. When it was presented to the two Houses of Parliament, they referred it to the Assembly of Divines, where it met with opposition.

"Dr. Featly declared he durst not abjure prelacy absolutely, because he had sworn to obey his Bishop in all things lawful and honest, and therefore proposed to qualify the second article thus: 'I will endeavor the extirpation of Popery, and all anti-christian, tyrannical, or independent Prelacy;' but it was carried against him. Dr. Burgess objected to several articles, and was not without some difficulty persuaded to subscribe, after he had been suspended." This looks very much like the days of *compromise*, does it not? Yet, there was a compromise. Mr. Gataker, and *many others*, declared for primitive episcopacy, or for one stated president, with his presbyters to govern every church, and refused to subscribe till a parenthesis was inserted, declaring what sort of prelacy was to be abjured.

The Scots, who had been introduced into the Assembly, were for abjuring episcopacy as simply unlawful, but the English Divines were generally against it. The English pressed chiefly for a civil League, but the Scots would have a religious one, to which the English were *obliged* to yield, taking care at the same time, to leave a door open for a latitude of interpretation. Here was a *compromise*. And what was this door of "latitude of interpretation?" It was this: The English inserted the phrase, "of reforming according to the word of God;" by which they thought themselves secure from the inroads of Presbytery. The Scots inserted the words "according to the practice of the best reformed churches," in which they were confident their discipline must be included. Here was a *compromise* from necessity. The English were obliged to adopt a religious League and Covenant, or not obtain the assistance of the Scots in a war which they were carrying on in defence of civil and religious liberty. As your reading is much more extensive and minute than mine, I beg you to point out the instances where compromises were made, and a latitude of interpretation allowed on points of doctrine. I believe it will be a difficult task for you, or any member of the New School, to do this. And if this be not done, I hope to hear no more about *compromising* the truths of God.

Upon what, I consider a groundless assertion, with regard to *compromise*, in the Westminster Assembly, you build the following proposition, p. 18, namely:

"An approximation towards unity of opinion as to the best modes of expressing our individual views of Divine truth, is all

that ever can be obtained in our adherence to a public creed." Then I affirm that "approximation" can be obtained without any "public creed." *Quod erat demonstrandum.* Away with all public creeds! "Approximation towards unity of opinion" can be obtained by adherence to the Bible, as the standard of our "common Christianity." And as you declare that "We need the untrammelled assistance of all our friends," p. 14, then truly the Rev. Mr. P. of the 1st Congregational Church, in Cincinnati, and Rev. Mr. W. of the 1st Presbyterian Church, may henceforth exchange pulpits in this day of *united division!!* I will here advertise you that as our church has become so corrupt, like the church at Corinth, as to be incapable of exercising discipline; and as union upon the compromise of truth and error is to be the standing order of the day—there are some who believe that a compromise has been made between the Miami University and Lane Seminary. Is this so? Is the Seminary to send literary students to the University, and the University to send theological students to the Seminary? Are these institutions thus "to play into each other's hands?" The public and the church have a right to an explicit answer. Not that I claim to be the public or the church, nor have I been appointed to ask the question. But you ought to know what the belief of some, and not a few, is on this subject, and if the belief is ill founded, I think you ought to disabuse the University from the odium of such a suspicion.

You have laid down a "general principle," and applied it to the Presbyterian Church, namely: that "Mutual confession of equal corruptions, and equal apostacies," must be "the broad basis, the spirit of" our "union," page 3, 4. I stop not to inquire whether this "general principle" is at all contained in your text. I have not sagacity enough to see it there. Nor can I discover it in your references, on p. 14. But if you adhere to this principle, the Presbyterian Church already divided, can never be united.

Can any man, who fears God and loves the truth, make "confession of equal corruptions and equal apostacies," with those who propagate heresy among us? Can any Presbytery or Synod, adhering to the doctrines and order of the church, make such confession, when, by the influence of Arminian and Pelagian heresies, all their efforts to maintain truth and order are paralyzed? Take your own text—can Judah, who maintained the true worship of God, confess "equal corruptions and equal apostacies" with Israel, who set up the calves at Dan and Bethel?

I say, sir, if you adhere to this "general principle," then our church is divided already by a deep and impassable gulph! There are not a few who would suffer all the tortures of the inquisition sooner than make "mutual confession of equal corruptions, and equal apostacies," with men whom they know to be corrupters of the word of God and the discipline of his house.

If we have no other basis of union than such "mutual confes-

sions," there never can be union. If all honest men and all knaves are to come together on the ground of "mutual confession of equal corruptions," then light and darkness can have *fellowship*—Christ and Belial *concord*.

Page 18, you have recommended a course of reading, to which no one will probably object, and such a course might be profitable to some who have not taken it. But what is the utility of such a course of reading? The reader might gain some knowledge of ecclesiastical history, by reviewing parts of the state of the church, in the progress of the reformation, when every thing but the *Word of God*, was in a revolutionary, fluctuating, and unsettled state—when a corrupt King was conniving at Popery, and a reforming Parliament was calling in the aid of the Scots to settle affairs both in church and state—when *high* and *low* Episcopalians, *high* and *low* Presbyterians, Independents and Erastians, were endeavoring to settle the standards of the Church, to suit their several parties. Suppose the reader should discover, as you have done, that Owen and Baxter, who never professed to belong to the same party, differed in theology—suppose he should find out that Twiss, and Harle, and Laud, and Usher, differed, when nothing was decided but the Solemn League and Covenant, and when every man was required to swallow this enormous pill, however revolting it might be to his conscience, would that be a good reason for Presbyterians *now* to differ in theological opinions, when they have a well defined and settled system, which has been adopted by them all as the confession of their faith? You might as well request us to read the lives of Toplady and Wesley, of Hervey and Fletcher, of Dr. Mason and Bishop Hobart, in order to learn how widely Presbyterians may at this day *differ* and yet all *agree*! Your plea for union is as unsatisfactory as your assumptions are unfounded. You think very few are prepared to say to what an extent diversity of opinions, as to doctrines, exists among the ministers of the Presbyterian church, and you add, "It is a hard matter, even in this age of inventions, to find a new shade of error, or a new cause of theological difference," p. 18. This is readily granted. Does it therefore follow that all these shades of error are to be tolerated in the Presbyterian church? And because you say, "happy results have been realized" by the labors of men of different denominations, in a way which was not "contemplated by the leading men of the Westminster Assembly," does it follow that the purity, peace, and prosperity of the Presbyterian church are to be promoted by a *compromise* which leaves every man to teach and to do "untrammelled" whatever is right in his own eyes?

This word "untrammelled," p. 14, must remind many of a distinguished man, who disdains to be confined, by any "frame-work" around the Bible. You apprehend no "great danger" from a variety of opinions, and plans, and operations, if all be said and done "in a christian spirit;" p. 13. The wolf then has nothing

to do but to put on the sheep's clothing, and go on in our church saying and doing what he will.

Paul, I think, differed from you in opinion. He thought Satan could be transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness, and he stood ready to anathematize an angel from heaven, if he preached another gospel, no matter what spirit he might manifest.

In comparing page 13, 14 and 18, I am constrained to think that you have placed on a level the "diversity of gifts bestowed by our Lord and Master upon his people" with "the diversity of opinions as to doctrines which exist among the ministers of the Presbyterian church, in the present generation." If this is not your meaning, then your whole argument is inconclusive. If this be your meaning, then I have no language to express my surprise and regret.

Page 9, you have given us a picture of what you call "American Presbyterianism." I shall not undertake to point out either its beauties or defects, at present, but just say, that it appears to me to be thrown in, like the Adhering Act of the last General Assembly, "an unabating attachment to the standards of our church"—i. e. *a passport to heresy in the wholesale*. Far be it from me to charge the General Assembly or Dr. Bishop with heresy. I believe they have had their share in giving passports to heretics.

We are told, Eccl. i. 9, that "There is no *new* thing under the sun;" and you have told us, "it is hard to find a *new* shade of error, or a *new* cause of theological difference." Yet there is one thing *new* and *strange* to me, that such a man as Dr. Bishop, whose praise is so extensive in the churches—whose talents are unquestioned—and whose character has so long been above suspicion, should deliberately *compose*, solemnly *preach*, and gravely *publish* such a sermon as the one now before me. Truly "the gold has become dim, and the fine gold changed."

But, sir, neither schemes of unnatural mixture, nor the broad mantle of modern charity, can screen from merited rebuke the abuses which have obtained in the "*high places*" of the Presbyterian church.

You tell us, p. 18, "Baxter and Owen are readily appealed to, by almost every minister of the Presbyterian church, as standards of correct theological opinions." This is also *new* to me. What! quote Owen and Baxter as standards, when you tell us they "differed in their explanations of some of the *most important doctrines* of the Westminster Confession!" No, sir, ministers of the Presbyterian church, of good sense and honesty, never quote Owen, nor Baxter, nor Witherspoon, nor Davies, as *standards*, but they bring the writings of these men to the standards of our church, and consider them worthy of regard only so far as they agree with *these*. So, I will gladly quote Dr. Bishop. In your "Apology for Calvinism," which you published against the Ar-

minian tenets of the Springfield Presbytery, you said, "To warn and fortify their people against these errors, is the incumbent duty of *those* who serve in the sacred office." Instead of reading "Heber's life of Jeremy Taylor," to discover how men differed in "the Westminster age," I have read your excellent "Apology for Calvinism," in which you ably expose the Arminian errors, and shew clearly that "if our notions on the atonement be either false in themselves, or confused and imperfect, they will contaminate and mislead us in every other article of the Christian faith." And you justly feared that they who had adopted the Arminian notion of a "universal purchase," would soon deny every essential doctrine of the gospel. You have lived to see that your fears were not groundless. You ably defended the use of creeds and confessions, the doctrine of the Covenants, the total inability of fallen man, the satisfaction of Christ made for the elect *only*, and regeneration, not by moral suasion, but, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Since the publication of your Apology, you have seen the *wild-fire* and the *wild-water* of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell—the wild dancing of the Shakers, and the Arminianism of the Cumberlands desolating the churches of the West. You have lived to see *new* men and *new* measures creeping in and starting up among ourselves; and by Arminian and Pelagian heresies, dividing our churches and Presbyteries from Newburyport to Marion. And where is Dr. Bishop found, April 23d, 1833? In the 2d Presbyterian church, in the city of Cincinnati, on a special occasion, by special appointment, preaching *a plea for union*, which really appears to me, to annihilate the use of all creeds and confessions, and leave every man "untrammelled," to preach whatever opinions, and pursue whatever plans may seem right in his own eyes. This, sir, is a subject of deep regret. You and your friends, I am informed, have been engaged in special prayer for me. This was kind, and as far as you prayed right, I hope the Lord has heard you and will answer in mercy. Be assured, my respected friend and brother, that I have not forgotten you in my imperfect addresses at a throne of Grace. I do hope you will take my plainness as the greatest proof of my sincere friendship, and believe me with much esteem, your's affectionately,

J. L. WILSON.







